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18 May 1966

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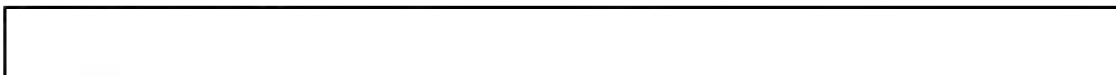


CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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US; Syria; [redacted]

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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EDT)

The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Two South Vietnamese Regional Force companies, conducting a local operation some 16 miles northeast of Bac Lieu city in the delta, yesterday contacted an estimated two Viet Cong companies. Government troops, reinforced by a Ranger battalion, have so far killed 132 Viet Cong against friendly losses of six killed (1 US) and 35 wounded (3 US).

In adjacent Ba Xuyen Province, a Viet Cong force of unknown size early this morning fired 20 rounds from 81-mm. mortars at Soc Trang Airfield near the provincial capital. One American was wounded and one reconnaissance aircraft and three helicopters received damage.

On 16 May, elements of the US 1st Cavalry Division on a local security operation near the division base at An Khe, Binh Dinh Province, engaged an estimated Communist battalion for six hours with losses of 12 killed and 28 wounded compared to known enemy losses of 28 killed. Light contact was re-established yesterday, but no further casualties have been reported.

The Communists have suffered substantial losses of men and equipment as a result of two extended allied operations which terminated on 16 May. In Operation DAVY CROCKETT in Binh Dinh Province, the Communists suffered a total of 374 killed and 82 captured plus significant losses of weapons, ammunition, and rice. In Operation BIRMINGHAM, targeted against Viet Cong "War Zone C" in Tay Ninh Province, enemy losses were 116 killed and 28 captured, 66 base camps destroyed, and large quantities of weapons, clothing, medicine, food, and POL seized or destroyed. Total friendly casualties in the two operations were 99 killed (81 US) and 451 wounded (386 US).

Political Developments in South Vietnam: Premier Ky arrived in Da Nang today and attended the ceremony formally installing General Huynh Van Cao as I Corps Commander. Ky's immediate plans thereafter were unknown. The situation in Da Nang generally remains unchanged, with "struggle" forces still reported in the main pagoda and in the eastern section of the city.

[A report yesterday of government troop movements north from Da Nang has not been verified, although a blocking position a few miles north of Da Nang may now be occupied by Saigon troops. Various sources, however, have suggested that the government may soon attempt to restore its authority in Hue.]

Hue was reported quiet but tense late yesterday following a fire fight between Catholic villagers and pro-"struggle" troops. [Blocking positions were also manned by antigovernment forces south of the city in response to reports that Saigon troops were approaching.]

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[After a conversation with Tri Quang late yesterday, a US consular official commented that Quang's attitude appeared to have shifted from one of appealing for US support to extreme bitterness over what he interprets as US support for the government's actions, including the shooting of a "struggle" group soldier by an American yesterday.]

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[the military Directorate's plan now being implemented to restore its authority in I Corps includes the clearing of pagodas in Da Nang and the eventual military occupation of Hue.]

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*Dominican Republic: Juan Bosch, using his proven tactic, is threatening to pull his party out of the 1 June elections.

In a radiobroadcast of 17 May, Bosch said his Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) will withdraw from the race unless the provisional government takes steps within 48 hours to halt alleged intimidation of his partisans by the military and by his political opposition. Bosch did not, however, spell out any specific measures he considers necessary to insure his participation in the elections.

Bosch's motives for threatening this action are obscure. It may be that, cooped up in his Santo Domingo house, he is misinterpreting sporadic campaign skirmishes involving his partisans and those of Joaquin Balaguer as acts of systematic terrorism.

More likely, however, the PRD leader is drawing a portrait of rampant violence in order to create a rationale for his failure to take to the hustings. In addition, several observers have recently noted what they believe to be an upsurge of support for Balaguer, and Bosch may be attempting to compensate for this by recapturing the limelight.

Bosch may continue his allegations of violence in order to keep open the possibility of a last minute withdrawal in the event he judges he cannot win at the polls. He may also be laying the groundwork for refusing to accept the results if he is defeated.

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[* Because of the shortage of time for preparation of this item, the analytic interpretation presented here has been produced by the Central Intelligence Agency without the participation of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State or of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Department of Defense.]

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Communist China - US: Peking's follow-up to its initial charge that the US shot down a MIG fighter over China on 12 May appears designed to keep the incident in the news so that the Chinese can score propaganda points and generate deterrent political pressure in the US. In a broadcast on 17 May the Chinese announced that they are publishing photographs of US-made auxiliary fuel tanks and fragments of air-to-air missiles which Peking asserts were picked up in Yunnan Province near the scene of the engagement. The Chinese are putting these forward as new proof of a "grave war provocation" and have repeated threats issued many times in the past that the Chinese people are ready to fight to the end if the US "should dare to impose war on them" at some unspecified future time.

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Syria: Tension is high among rival Syrian military leaders, and an open conflict could break out at any time. The three-month-old radical Baathist junta has been unable to develop any firm power base, and some key military units are apparently still withholding full support for the regime. In addition, factionalism within the coup group itself is reportedly increasing, and infighting over such crucial questions as whether or not to allow political freedom to the Communist Party of Syria could provoke an early break.

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